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ABSTRACT

Questions of what to teach and what ought to be taught in the public schools are explored. Before addressing the current controversy about content in education, it is important to know as precisely as possible what has actually been taught and whether the teachings have been effective. The content of school history, literature, and language is examined as these subjects developed from the beginnings of public schools in America to the present. Public education as it stands today is the product of happenstance rather than an unassailable ideal Platonic creation. An overview is provided of the debate over multicultural education, with a look at its canon, the call for a return to basics, and the politics of inclusion. Respecting the cultures of students of all kinds has profound implications for curriculum and instruction. Fully educating the poorest students will require building downward from a set of broadly conceived community values and upward from texts and visions of these ideals. (Contains 340 references.) (SLD)

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